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A chauffeur for thousands

HARVEY VOOGD

"There was this little girl, not yet old enough to talk," recalls Vern Potter. "When she got on with her mother, her smile would make the rest of my day."

As a bus driver for Edmonton Transit, Potter collected smiles along with tickets and chatted with his customers. He drove people to work and dropped them off at home. He helped people make their connections, and never forgot to make his own.

"As the driver, when you have a problem, you end up defending people on the bus," says Potter. "If you get along with the people you carry, they'll make your work a lot easier for you."

Last month, after thirty-eight years on the road, Potter finally retired. Many of his riders over the years took one last trip to help him celebrate his career.

Delton resident and bus rider Gina Gariano decorated his bus with balloons and ribbons. "He was definitely the friendliest #143 bus driver," says Gariano. "Vern was always friendly, even when I got on the bus at 6:00 a.m."

Other passengers gave him cookies, cards, thanks and even a bottle of Baileys Irish Cream liquor.

Rough road to start

Potter did not grow up dreaming of being a bus driver. He went to college and studied accounting. However, after articling for a year with a Certified General Accountant in his home town of Vermillion, he decided it wasn't the career he wanted.

For the next three months, he worked different jobs around Canada before coming to Edmonton. Through his brother-in-law, he got a job at a trailer manufacturing plant.

"A guy at the plant had a friend who drove a City bus," remembers Potter. "So one afternoon we rode the bus and it stuck with me."

A couple years later, after bouncing around the labour market, he figured out what mattered for him. "I realized I liked people and I wanted to get out of the office. It was also a bit of a cop out. Driving bus seemed to be the path of least resistance."

Potter applied for a job and months later started his career. Good fortune was smiling as he recalls the man who hired him wanted to see if someone from outside the city could do the job.

It turned out that a Vermillion boy could drive a bus. In his entire time behind the wheel, Potter never had a chargeable accident. For the past 31 years, he never put a dent on a car, although he admits he broke a few bus mirrors.

Front row seat

As the third-most senior driver in the entire Edmonton Transit system, Potter had accrued enough seniority to pick the route he wanted. As a Delton resident, he chose route 143 through Westwood, Delton and Eastwood for his last 30 months on the job.

"It went by my house," explains Potter. "It was handy."

Behind the big windshield, he had a daily look at his neighborhood on the move. It wasn't always smiles, cookies and cream.

Two months ago at the Coliseum station, a man jumped on his bus, got on his hands and knees, and ordered Potter to leave.

"He had a big mark on the side of his head, his lip was a mess, he was petrified and he kept saying 'they're going to kill, they're going to kill me,'" remembers Potter.



THE LAST BUS HE'LL EVER DRIVE. VERN POTTER AND HIS WIFE WENDY STADEN CELEBRATE 38 YEARS OF DRIVING FOR EDMONTON PUBLIC TRANSIT.

Figuring him for a gang member, he pulled the bus out of the station, and passed another man hunting his new passenger. He ordered his distraught customer to come up front, and asked him what was going on.

The man said he had been held captive for two hours and only escaped by overpowering the guard.

"He was a tough looking gang-banger," says Potter. "He shook my hand when he got off the bus and said 'I'm not usually like this'. An hour later, I got a description of the guy who was on my bus from Transit. I guess the

police were looking for him."

End of the run

Potter plans to retire in his Delton home he bought in 1990. He wants to walk down the quiet street, enjoy the big trees, and chat with his neighbors. He has no regrets about "taking the path of least resistance" but wouldn't recommend driving bus to someone starting out. Aside from the fare rising from 25 cents a ride, the industry has changed.

"When I began, it took 7 to 8 years to get a good shift," says Potter. "Though the pay is \$30 an hour, it

now takes 25 years to get a day run."

On his last day driving, he parked his bus early, hung up his keys, and enjoyed the traditional send-off party thrown by the people he knew for 38 years.

But for Potter's real retirement came the day before as he drove his last full shift.

"I felt the whole weight of the job come off my shoulders," says Potter. "It was total calming, totally relaxing. This retirement feeling is different than anything I've ever felt before. It feels good right where I am."

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dog talk

WITH DARLENE TAYLOR
OWNER OF K9 BEHAVE

"The man ran into the small town service station, 'Where's your washroom? It's an emergency!' As the woman pointed towards the back through the garage she attempted to stutter something. The man in a rush didn't wait to hear and charged through the half-open door of the washroom. As he locked the door and turned on the light he saw the bright white teeth of a growling dog – obviously the station's guard dog. The man looked away, turning his head slowly from side to side, although out of the corner of his eye he watched the dog. A big exaggerated yawn crossed the man's face, followed soon after by another and another. It was difficult to remain calm but soon the dog also started to yawn, stretched, and lay down in the corner."

Originally published in Norwegian and later in English (1997) under the title, *On Talking Terms With Dogs: Calming Signals*, Turid Rugaas' methods of training with kindness and respect changed how people looked at dogs.

Rugaas delved into the dynamics of how dogs mediate new, and possibly aggressive, introductions. Two dogs approach each other. One isn't happy. He goes stiff and leans forward on his paws. He growls or barks and the hair rises on his back. The other dog tries to diffuse the tension by slowly lowering and swinging his head from side to side. He avoids direct eye contact. He may yawn, he may go to a tree and

start sniffing. Sensing no threat, the unhappy dog begins to relax and responds by also sniffing. The calming signals have been well received.

Dogs love to chase each other, but running and squealing will excite the dog's prey drive. Rugaas showed how dogs diffuse potentially tense situations by splitting, turning away, curving, yawning, sniffing, and moving slowly. An older dog may slowly walk between two younger dogs to signal a brief time out if they have been playing too hard. This is so play does not turn into prey.

When humans try to scare-off unwelcome dogs, they often yell angrily or make loud noises - like banging on fences. A well-aimed shoe is often hurled. This may frighten away a few dogs, but these actions can create the opposite effect. The dog may start to growl and bark at the aggressor.

Dogs have two choices in dangerous situations: fight or flight. If they perceive themselves to be trapped or unable to escape, they will try to

Barking at dogs



Stock

appear aggressive and dangerous. Just like humans, they will not turn their backs. They will bark and lunge.

Thankfully, most dogs are peace makers. And thanks to Rugaas's research, humans can learn to mimic the calming signals dogs send each other.

When confronted with an angry dog, pretend to ignore him. Turn your head from side to side. You can also look toward the sky or at an object such as a tree. Yawn. Keep your arms down by hugging yourself. Pretend to be bored by the whole situation. Faking or exaggerating any of these calming movements works extremely well. Walk slowly away from the dog. Cross the street.

k9behave@gmail.com



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

Helping Small Business, Helping Students

Canada Summer Jobs helps small businesses create job opportunities for students. The initiative focuses on local priorities, while achieving tangible results for both students and their communities. This is a great opportunity for employers to offset costs during the summer months.

The program provides work experiences for students, recognizing that local circumstances, community needs and priorities vary widely. Our Federal Conservative Government has increased the budget for **Canada Summer Jobs** by \$10 million, to total \$107.5 million.

Funding is provided to small private sector for-profit employers with 50 or fewer employees, not-for-profit and public-sector employers to create summer job opportunities for full-time students aged 15 to 30 who are intending to return to their studies in the next school year. Employers who wish to take part in this year's program must apply by February 28.

Proposals will be assessed using the following guidelines: service to local communities; jobs that support local priorities; jobs that provide career-related experience or early work experience; jobs with a salary that contributes to the student's income; employers who provide supervision and mentoring; project activities that are directed toward members of, and support the vitality of, an official language minority community; and employers who intend to hire priority students (those with disabilities, Aboriginals and members of visible minority groups).

Small private sector for-profit businesses with 50 or fewer employees and public-sector employers are eligible for up to 50 percent of the provincial minimum hourly wage. Not-for-profit employers are eligible for up to 100 percent of the provincial minimum \$8.80 hourly wage and mandatory employment-related costs.

Employers looking for more information may contact the Service Canada Centre at Canada Place on Jasper Avenue, go online at www.servicecanada.gc.ca or call 1-800-935-5555.

I think the **Canada Summer Jobs** Program is a win-win for employers, students and all Canadians.

What do you think?

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avenue initiative revitalization

The Avenue Initiative is a community based revitalization of 118th Ave from Nait to Northlands. The community has come together to work with the City to develop a council approved strategy that will create a safe, walkable community for everyone.



For information call
Veronica at
780-496-1913

Bring your idea to the community!

The deadline for matching grants is the 15th of the month.

Do you have an idea that would make a difference in your neighborhood? We are looking for projects that will enhance, beautify, create a sense of community or improve safety. The Neighborhood Matching Fund will match your volunteer time or donations in kind to make your project a reality. You can apply for up to \$20,000 for large community projects. SMALL SPARKS funds up to \$250.00 for local neighborhood events such as block parties or fence painting. For an application and more information go to www.avenueinitiative.ca or call Veronica at 780-496-1913.

Think About Joining a Working Group!

Groups meet on a monthly basis to implement the Avenue Initiative. To get involved call 780-496-1913 or email avenueinitiative@edmonton.ca

1) Streetscape-- 1st Tuesday of the month (as needed)

Working on details of the streetscape.

2) Beautification & Cleanliness-- 2nd Wednesday of the month. Next Meeting February 9th

Works on special events, community clean ups and beautification projects.

3) Safe Streets-- 3rd Wednesday of the month. Next Meeting February 16th

Works with EPS, Bylaw & Safe Housing to create a safe community.

Licking the plates at likeable Lan's

The Daring Diner

WITH ANGIE KLEIN

Lan's Asian Grill
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As I entered the front door to Lan's Asian Grill, I was overwhelmed by the fabulous scent of sweet curry and lemongrass. While this brought on intense pangs of hunger, I was immediately distracted by the cheerful banter -- and a few well-placed compliments -- of the owner Tom Lin. With welcoming humour, he apologized for keeping me waiting, joking "The reason the food here is so good is because the service is lousy." Lim owns a clean, modern Thai-Vietnamese restaurant in Westwood, and takes care of his customers as well as he does his place. While I was there, each customer was greeted graciously.

I ordered a few take-out

dishes from the amusing menu boards, one of which I was pleased to see was vegan. As I waited for my food, Tom served me as if I was a sitting customer. The jokes were free. Asked about his nationality, he answered, "25% Laos, 25% Thai, 50% Chinese and 100% Canadian."

Levity aside, he was careful to point out the peanut and sesame seed content of his dishes and inquired about any possible food allergies. It was hard to leave.

The take-out was delicious and it survived the freezing cold car trip home still nice and hot. My daughter and I dished out red curry chicken stew over the vermicelli noodles and crisp bean sprouts. It was soft and sweet with just the right amount of kick.

We plated up the vegan Tom Yum Fried Rice and Pad Thai Noodles and dug in. I had ordered the Pad



Darren Boisvert

Thai Noodles hot, but it could have been spicier. But my daughter found it hot enough. The rice was sweet and spicy, with just enough

lemongrass to compliment the other flavors.

The portions were generous and the price reasonable. For \$30.00, two ate well

and I had leftovers for lunch the next day. I think I'll pay another visit to Lan's to try his Asian import beer and Sweet Roti.

CRUD awards now quarterly

CHRIS HAYDUK

The Nice Neighbour Recognition Award presented by Community Response to Urban Disorder (CRUD) will be running once again. This year, 2011, CRUD is excited to offer the Nice Neighbour Recognition Award quarterly. Last year we recognized 12 great community members over the course of the year. We had a great response from residents and met people we

previously did not know. All award recipients receive a wonderful prize pack that is donated from local businesses. We look forward to meeting more wonderful neighbours in 2011.

The purpose of this program is to recognize the wonderful and often over-looked contributions residents make in their neighbourhood. Do your neighbours shovel your walks, rake leaves, or help with the garden? Do they

contribute with the community league or give their time to help build a welcoming community? How do your neighbours make your life better? We are excited to see all of the nominations for this year's award.

For details on the CRUD Nice Neighbour Recognition Awards along with other community building initiatives visit www.crudedmonton.org.

CRIME WATCH

By Darren Boisvert

Theft from vehicles, theft of vehicles, and assaults were the most common crimes in the community during December. Most of the incidents occurred between 87th Street to 101 Street, and 115th Avenue to 118th Avenue.

Vehicles remain a common target for thieves. Keep them locked, park near your house, and keep your porch light on.

The area around 118th Avenue and 95th street reported the highest concentration of assaults. Walk with a friend, be vigilant, and report any suspicious persons to the EPS.

For any community policing concerns, contact Paul Pilon, the new Community Liaison Constable (CLC), at 780-421-2602 and paul.pilon@edmontonpolice.ca.



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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Rat Creek Press Association is to highlight community news, activities, and recreational opportunities as well as local residents and businesses to support the growth of a strong, vibrant, well-connected community.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Rat Creek Press is a community newspaper, and above all other considerations, is a forum for all people in our community. We encourage comments that further discussion on a given article or subject, provide constructive criticism, or offer an idea for community activity.

The Rat Creek Press has an obligation to print Letters to the Editor as part of our mandate to encourage public debate. Letters critical of RCP policy, editorials, reportage, or conduct will be given priority over all other submissions, and will be reprinted without editorial comment.

The RCP may receive more letters and columns than available space can accommodate, therefore not all submissions can be acknowledged or printed. Letters should not be longer than 250 words and must include the name, location and contact information of the author. Op-Ed columns should be 600-800 words long, and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar.

All columns, letters or cartoons submitted are attributed to the author and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Rat Creek Press. The RCP reserves the right to edit all material and to remove any electronic comment at any time.

Submissions to The Rat Creek Press can be delivered to the Editor by paper mail and in person to 9210 118 Avenue Northwest, Edmonton, AB T5G 0N2, Canada and via email to editor@ratcreek.org.

Editorial

An oily upgrade for downtown

Addressing the Community Planning Association of Canada conference in Edmonton in 1962, Premier Ernest Manning advised planners and other government leaders to "Always give human considerations, high if not top priority, in your decisions."

This is sound advice the current city council should consider in its deliberations on whether to allow Oiler owner Darryl Katz to build a new downtown arena.

With lukewarm support in Edmonton for taxpayer money to subsidize a professional hockey franchise, zero need for a second city stadium, and with the Central McDougall and Oliver community leagues expressing concern, city council's support for the arena seems to be based on nothing more than wishful thinking.

Their support coalesces around the simple idea that the new arena will revitalize downtown.

"Why would it?" asks Jamie LaBonte, who has lived in the shadow of Rexall Place for nine years. "It didn't revitalize this neighborhood at all."

A fair question given the history of building large event venues in residential neigh-

borhoods.

The 1968 comprehensive report by the City's Director of Planning advised city council on seven proposals for a stadium complex in Edmonton. Four submissions wanted it built at 97th street and Jasper Avenue, one was to be located in the flats of the river valley (near the current convention Centre), and two suggested the CNR land along 104th Avenue -- the exact location the Katz group is now proposing for their entertainment complex.

In his final recommendations, he noted that the Exhibition grounds site was too far removed from downtown to attract convention bookings, too far separated from first-class hotels, and presciently, remarked that, "118th does not offer quick traffic dispersal because of the concentration of retail functions along its length and the consequent inter-mixing of through and local traffic."

In 1974, (after the coliseum was built) discussion moved to the construction of the Commonwealth Stadium, and once again, the issue of community impact was sidelined. The City-commissioned report by engineer H.S. Ragan, briefly noted (then

dismissed as negligible) that "uncontrolled parking would be a problem, but the neighborhood west of the stadium (Cromdale) could be altered so parking would not be a problem."

Cromdale was certainly altered, but it wasn't revitalized. It was literally wiped off the city's map.

In 1975, the Planning Department wrote "Cromdale is a highly unstable neighborhood...Income is also low, Rapid Transit, conflicting land uses, roadway proposals, and exhibition expansion all contribute to the area's instability"

By 1982, (and one stadium later) the department no longer listed Cromdale as a community, but merely referred to it as "Coliseum/Stadium land."

While the social and housing problems in Cromdale, Parkdale, and Eastwood can't be laid at the feet of the millions of sports enthusiasts who have visited the area, it's also true that these tourists from the suburbs had no discernible positive impact on the economic health of our community.

But this community tried -- vainly -- to welcome them. The sports-themed integration

along 118th was a bust. So was the Walk of Fame. And what exactly was the baseball bat at 97th street supposed to signal? That 118th Avenue was a highway to the sports arenas?

Mayor Mandel gets full marks for championing local community initiatives, and finding creative ways to fund street and sewer upgrades. His argument that these large venues should be downtown to minimize the impact on residential areas is sound. But revitalizing?

At best, downtown will have yet another 'destination' venue that entices people to drive, park, head inside, be entertained, and leave. Darryl Katz understands this better than city council. That's why he's insisting on control of the shopping and restaurant complex that he will build as a shell to the coliseum. That's where the real 'revitalizing' will occur.

And as for the traffic, noise, beer cans, and declining property values that will occur in the McDougall and Oliver communities? Well, those are 'human considerations' and best swept aside while City council figures out ways to subsidize a billionaire's Oily upgrade.



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SPEAKER'S CORNER

Have opinions? Great- let's hear them!

Submissions email: editor@ratcreek.org

Fighting the 'affordable' fill

CORA SHAW

There are two proposed developments in our neighbourhood that deserve closer scrutiny: the Unilever Bottle Depot re-zoning application (which the Alberta Avenue Community League opposes) and the proposed Multi-Family Housing Development on 95 st between 113 Ave and 114 Ave. We are concerned about the density (160 units/4 stories/ underground parking) and the fact that half are being labeled as "affordable" units.

Affordable housing refers to lower than average, market owned or rented housing, provided to households who earn less than the median income and spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Neither the owner nor renter receives ongoing government subsidies. This differs from social housing units where the rent is geared to the income of the residents. They may be owned by either a not-for-profit or public agency, or alternatively, there may be a subsidy provided to the private sector owner to offset the market rental rates.

Both are geared towards income so it can be confusing. Social housing may also have some supports with it as well. The city is aware that we are one of 13 high-stressed communities dealing with more than its fair share of low-cost housing and this doesn't even count the many group homes in the community.



SITE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT. DO WE NEED MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Mayor Mandel has mandated eradication of homelessness in 10 years and it appears that it doesn't matter where these developments go. It's frustrating and city hall often doesn't listen.

The community Leagues and residents only receive notifications about a proposed development when there is a variance to the existing zone or if a property needs to be rezoned to accommodate a specific development. We cannot appeal a development because of who is going to be in the building. The Subdivision and Development Appeal Board only hears the community's concerns in regards to how the development fits in to the existing zone.

So what we need to do as a community is to work with the developers so that we can redevelop according to our vision of our neighbourhoods. We need to attend public open houses. We need to write to the

developer and e-copy Mayor Mandel. The Appeal Board needs to hear our voices. We need the community to attend the planning meetings. I hope to see you there.

Cora Shaw is the Development Committee Chair with the Alberta Avenue Community League. She can be contacted about any development issues at info@albertaave.org.

Public Meeting for Rezoning from CNC to DC2 For the Low Rise Development on 95 St between 113 ave and 114 ave

**Tuesday, February 1, 2011
6pm – 9pm
Alberta Avenue
Community League
9210-118th avenue
Lutz Room**

EDMONTON

Public Meeting

Proposal to rezone properties along 95 Street for apartment housing in Norwood

Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2011

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Alberta Avenue Community League Hall, 9210 – 118 Avenue NW

The public meeting will discuss a proposed application to amend the Norwood Neighbourhood Improvement Plan and the Zoning Bylaw from (CNC) Neighbourhood Convenience Commercial to (DC2) Site Specific Development Control Provision for properties located on the west side of 95 Street between 113 Avenue and 114 Avenue in Norwood.

The intent of the proposed application is to allow for the development of 155 units of apartment housing up to a maximum height of four storeys with underground parking. Approximately half of the units are proposed as market housing, and the other half as affordable housing in conjunction with the Cornerstones fund. On-site child care services are also proposed.

The meeting will provide the public an opportunity to comment, ask questions and learn about the planning process.

For more information, contact: Carla Semeniuk, Planner, Telephone: 780-496-1582, Fax: 780-496-6054 and Email: Carla.Semeniuk@edmonton.ca

Edmonton PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Services for deaf or hard of hearing persons provided upon request. Call 311 at TTY/NexTalk 780-944-5555 press 0; 311@edmonton.ca

What's The BIG Idea?

A license to print money

KIMBERLY FERLAND

Money is a challenge for both individuals and communities. It pays for what we want, provides us with what we need, and usually there's never enough to go around. It ebbs and flows from our households and bank accounts. Our labour can be valued differently by different employers and over time. In short, money is the grease for economic activity, but it's hard to grasp.

Communities are often faced with similar challenges when money stops flowing. Stores lose customers, trade withers, and communities lose resources. Money begins to flow out of the community when people purchase services in other areas and little money returns back home.

While conventional money has no roots, local currency provides communities with a license to print money. Comox Valley, Saltspring Island, Toronto and Calgary have all created community currencies which encourages citizens to shop local and invest their labour and skills within their home communities.

Community currencies increase local spending, support neighbourhood businesses, and encourages local companies to trade with

each other. There's no value in saving local currencies, so people spend it more quickly.

Money spends, but people have value. Community currencies allow neighbours to benefit from each other's skill. It places a premium on local talent. It encourages people to re-engage with their community and everyone benefits from the increased participation.

Have you ever thought, "I wish I could (insert favorite hobby here) and make it a bit of cash? Have you been searching for a creative and practical way to attract and thank volunteers? Do you want to shop local but find Wal Mart more affordable? Is your business interested in having an influx of dedicated local customers?

If any of the above scenarios piqued your interest, or you have any suggestions, contact Cathy Otto or Kimberly Ferland at ckfroeseland@yahoo.ca.

Welcome to our new Speaker's Corner. This is your monthly space to pitch the community on how to improve our neighbourhood. Grand ideas are fine. Grander ideas are finer. However, no business ventures. No self-promotion. No lead balloons.

Letters to the editor

Snow Angel Thanked

A huge thank you to the snow blowing angel who clears the sidewalks on 95A and 96 Streets in Norwood. You make walking through our neighbourhood easier and faster, and save us time and energy. Thank you so much. We all appreciate it.

*Rebecca Lippiatt-Long
Norwood*

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Grazing the virtual farmer's market

AN AVENUE HOMESTEADER WITH CARISSA HALTON

I was blog surfing last Saturday when I landed on the site for Gold Forest Grains. They sell Morinville grown grain and beef on their blog and through the Eat Local First website. I'd heard of Eat Local First but didn't know anything about it. So, as one is prone to do while surfing, I clicked the link.

Turns out, it's a virtual farmer's market. From locally grown grains to locally roasted coffee, from meat and dairy, to vegetables and fruit, it's all just a click away.

It's a wonder really. All you have to do to get some farm fresh eggs is click: BUY then PRODUCT LIST then EGGS then CHICKEN then ADD TO CART. After that, you fill out the usual paperwork and then wait until the next week when a cooler arrives on your doorstep. Inside you find eggs and a half dozen other items you forgot you bought.

It's a great deal, but more expensive. The prices aren't out of line from what you would pay at Planet Organic, but if budget's a priority for your grocery list, it's not a cheap alternative to braving Costco on a Saturday afternoon. That said, cheap isn't always worth it.

The food we eat is

wrapped in ethics, morality and philosophy: from where we buy it to what we choose to swallow. It's often difficult to separate the grinds from the coffee, but our food choices should balance our personal and collective well-being.

On the personal side, there's always taste to consider – like these carrots from Peas on Earth! One bite and I'm back to sunny evenings lolling on the quack grass lawn, chomping my garden carrots to the beat of bees and swaying trees.

Collectively, the issue of ecological sustainability should be factored into our purchases. Buying natural fertilizers and pesticide-free food leaves our water tables clear and soils nutrient rich. Shopping local benefits local growers, whose financial and relational investments are in the community. In essence, we subsidize quality grown food in

our collective backyard.

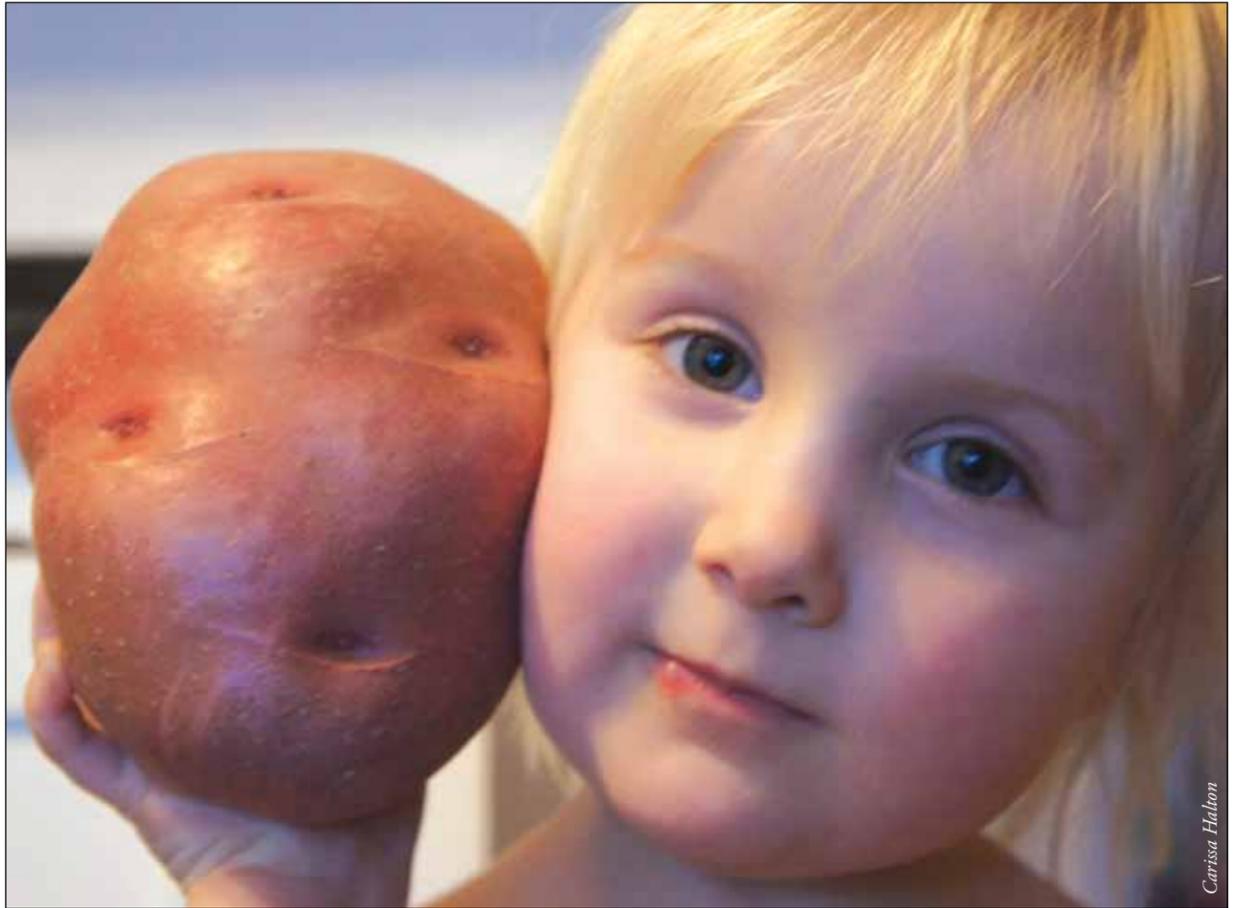
Few people have the budget for exclusively loading their shopping cart with organic, local, and fair trade products. Like many others, I pick my battles. I buy organic bananas, potatoes and onions because they are heavily sprayed, and I don't want to support farmers who expose their workers to toxic chemi-

cals. I buy fair trade coffee because I want to profit-share with cash crop harvesters. I grow my own apples. I make my own wine. Today, these are my choices. Tomorrow, I will adapt to the changing landscape the best I can.

So, with anticipation, I waited for Friday's delivery. When the cooler arrived, I brought it inside, unpacked the

food and lit the stove. On a cold, snowy night, I was happily distracted eating exceptionally firm potatoes fried in butter with local Enoki mushrooms, chased with the tang of cardamom-spiced Alberta salami. Good food really is a gift.

For more information search eatlocalfirst.com and avenuehomesteader.blogspot.com.



Carissa Halton



WARM UP TO WINTER WINTERLIGHT JAN 8 - MAR 5

FREE

winterlight.ca

 <p>DEEP FREEZE FESTIVAL Jan 8 - 9 Various venues along 118 Avenue <small>Produced by Arts on the Ave</small> deepfreeze fest.ca</p>	 <p>ICE ON WHYTE FESTIVAL Jan 13 - 23 Monday-Friday 2pm-10pm Saturday & Sunday 10am-10pm Old Strathcona \$5/adults-\$2.50/kids <small>Produced by the Old Strathcona Business Association</small> iceonwhyte.ca</p>	 <p>FLASHPOINT Saturday Jan 22 6:45-8pm Edmonton Ski Club <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>
 <p>ILLUMINATIONS Saturday Jan 29 4-10pm Churchill Square <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>	 <p>COMMON GROUND Feb 4 - 5 Friday 6-8pm Saturday 11am-8pm Giovanni Caboto Park <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>	 <p>SILVER SKATE FESTIVAL Feb 18 - 21 Hawrelak Park <small>Produced by the Silver Skate Festival</small> silverskatefestival.org</p>
 <p>FAMILY DAY Monday Feb 21 12-4pm Churchill Square <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>	 <p>MILL CREEK ADVENTURE WALK Feb 25 - 26 4-10pm Mill Creek Ravine Park <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>	 <p>STAR PARTY Saturday Mar 5 4-10pm Elk Island National Park <small>Produced by the Edmonton Arts Council</small> winterlight.ca</p>










Each one. Teach one.

Nii Tawiah Okurajah Koney, Executive Director Nile Valley Foundation Learning Centre

The Rat Creek Press is co-sponsoring Afrika Adorned -- An Evening of History, Art and Culture. Celebrating Black History Month. Sunday, 2 p.m., Carrot Cafe.

INTERVIEW BY
DARREN BOISVERT

Where are you originally from and why did you decide to come to Canada?

I'm from Acra, Ghana, in West Africa. I came to Canada by myself as a very young person forty years ago in 1970. I first discovered Canada through the Canadian Technical Institute that was very near my house. This institute train people in servicing cars and other occupations -- a community college or sorts. Most people I knew were interested in emigrating to the United States and England, but I started to go to the library and studied about Canada and the different culture that was there.

What was your first impression about Canada from your studies?

I learned about the western provinces being the bread basket of Canada. I learned about Canada's place in the Commonwealth. I decided to be part of a country that was growing. As a young person growing up, you want to be part of a country that will be great. I saw the diversity that was there, and how the Germans, Ukrainians and the Dutch all came with the idea of doing something better with their lives. I thought I could be part of it.

When you came here, what was your impression in relation to your preconceived notions?

I arrived in Toronto. I was impressed in how organized the country was. I fell in love with the space and the peacefulness of it. Normally, we view our birth place as the best the world has to offer, but when you emigrate, then you have a comparison. Canada stands

clear in my mind as a home of hospitality, a great landscape, and the potential to be great in the nations of the world.

How did you end up in Edmonton?

I had been visiting Edmonton on-and-off to see how I could fit into the community here. At first, I didn't think there were any black people here. I was surprised to see the diversity here. I found the Ukrainian community, the Chinese, Indian, and the Black community. I saw a city striving to be diverse, and the Avenue of Nations (107th Ave) stands as a testimony of a community willing to try. The Heritage Festival impressed me the most. I stood in the parking lot and was amazed. It's more than I could have imagined. My vision of things were coming to pass in my lifetime.

Why is this idea of diversity so important to you, and why did you start the Nile Valley Foundation to support that vision?

When I came here, Pierre Elliot Trudeau stands first in my mind. When he said, "It is Canada's fortune that people from many countries have come here with their traditions," I felt that anyone could come here and see who we are. If you want to be African, you can be here. Did you know that we are the only country in the western hemisphere that has a minister of culture that promotes diversity? They will fund you to learn your language, culture, dance -- whatever you want to do.

How have you benefited from that attitude and PET's legacy?

I can't see myself living in Germany and having the same privileges I do here. Where else can you find a Heritage Festival or a Caribana festival in numerous cities? I used to have a decorating company in Toronto, and I used to decorate city hall for Caribana. Even in City hall, they would support my culture.



What is the Nile Valley Foundation trying to accomplish?

There are a lot of people who are refugees, from Congo, Sierra Leone, and as a Canadian, I am welcoming them and letting them know that this is a good country. I'm driven by the idea of sharing. In the Edmonton Public Library, there is a saying, you don't come to borrow a book, you come to share. I want to share my history and African People's history just as this diaspora shares theirs with me.

How would you answer concerns about the violence that is often highlighted coming out of the Somalian community in Edmonton?

I would like the non-African Canadian to understand that the shootings that are going on are new Canadians experiencing cultural shock. Somalians have experienced war from the time they were born. The shock is a having an

abundance of everything, and how parents often lose control of their children because of the new-found freedom they have discovered. I believe that governments can be part of the opening up process, like social services where kids can get good care, and they can learn to follow the rules when they go to school. None of these things are structured from where they emigrated from. What has made Canada great is the structure you have -- the law, city councils, government -- and when you come from a lawless environment, it is hard to learn how to comply. So I want to assure the Canadian community that better days are ahead and these things will pass.

How will these things pass? What concrete ideas are you proposing to curb this violence?

We have a saying: Each one, teach one. The Nile Valley Foundation wants to reach out to the community and

let them know that history is part of them, and it will give them a base to move forward. When people know who they are, they do better. Once we begin to answer the question of "who am I", then we are on the road to building a better community.

What would you like other Canadians to learn through these Black History Month events?

I want people to know that African people are the warmest in the world. I want them to see past what they might hear from the radio. I want them to learn about Africa's contribution to human development, their understanding of agriculture, and the start of civilization in the Nile. The beginning of man. I want to show the community the benefit of allowing us to share our stories with them. At the end of the day, to know me is to love me. If we know our fellow citizens, we are less afraid of them.

AFRIKA ON THE AVE

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT THE CARROT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11

7 pm – Join us for an evening with performer, singer and songwriter Althea Cunningham

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13

2 pm – "Afrika Adorned": a panel discussion featuring Nii Tawiah Koney (The Nile Valley Foundation), Dr. Patrick Iroegbu (Grant MacEwan University) and Professor George Sefa Dei (University of Toronto)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

7 pm – Treats for your poetic ears, by Edmonton Team Slam Poets Titilope Sonuga, Ifeoma Chiwetelu, Prince Ali and guests

PLUS: check out the month-long window display featuring Fil Fraser's book, How the Blacks Created Canada and paintings by Elsa Robinson

THE CARROT COMMUNITY ARTS COFFEEHOUSE
9351-118 AVENUE - EDMONTON

Co-produced by
Arts on the Ave Edmonton Society
Writers Guild of Alberta
Valerie Mason-John aka Queenie

With the generous support of
City of Edmonton Avenue Initiative Revitalization
Rat Creek Press

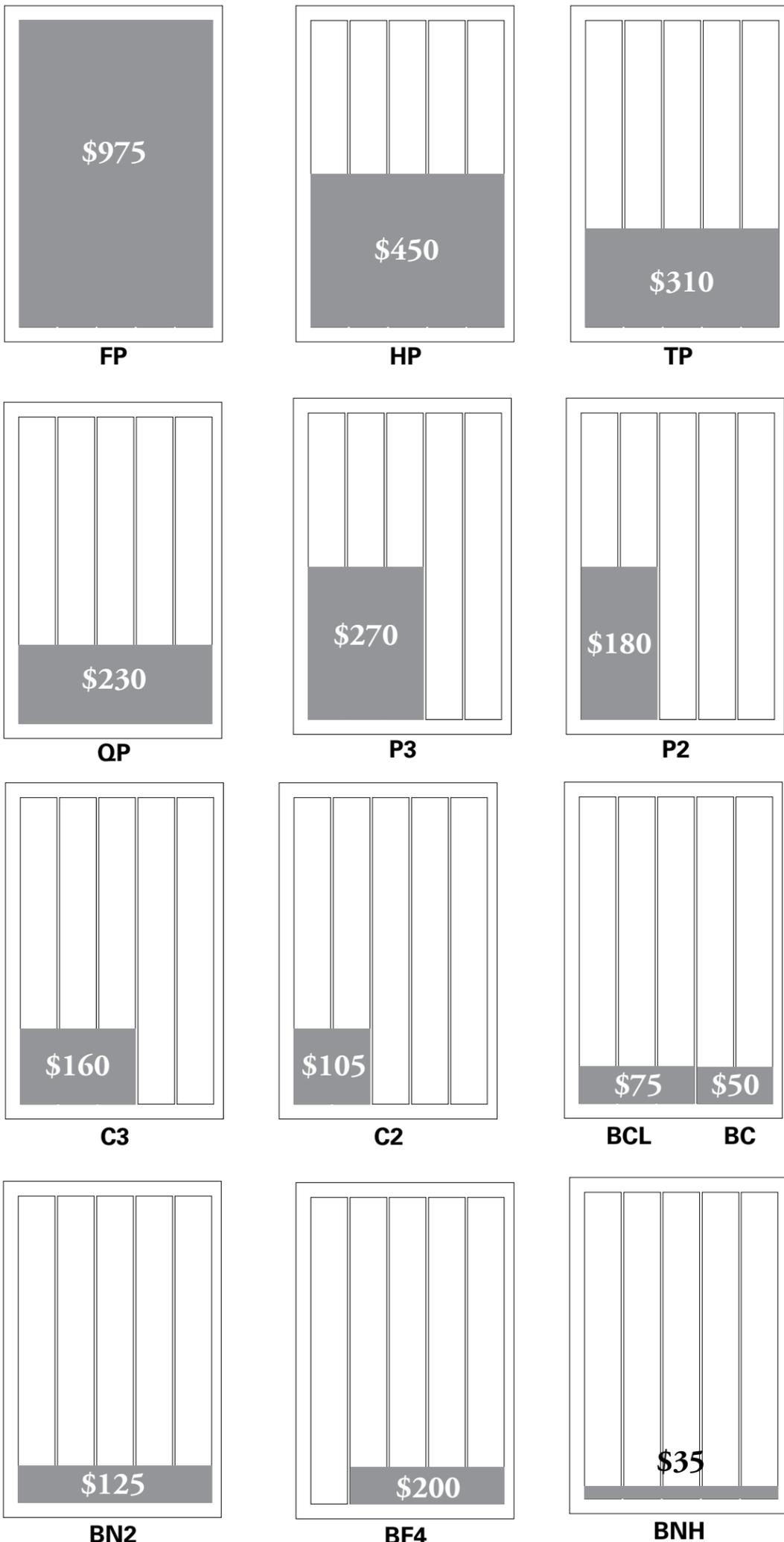


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C2 2 col. x 4.25 inches	3.75	4.25	\$105
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For more information

Contact Laurie Tod at 780.479.6285 or ads@ratcreek.org

*Text only in black and white

WE 'AVE WORDS

A showcase of poetry and prose from Edmonton's finest writers

Page editor: Michelle Earl Submissions email: Lit@ratcreek.org

Lightning jig-jags across night sky

Luke Tracey Newmann



Storm at Sylvan Lake
Warm prairie lakeshore becomes
North Atlantic coast

Long-haul trucker
Four way blinkers, sleeps in cab
Wheels of Time roll on

Morning frost on grass
Relentless year wheel turning
Squeezes heat from days

Falling leaves knitting
Warm blanket for earth to wear
During winter's sleep

Crunchy autumn leaves
Strolling through giant cornflakes
Soon they'll be frosted

Sunset burnished gold
Evening spray-paints autumn leaves
Gold-on-gold treasure

Summer is over
Gone aboard first southbound flight
Air Canada geese

October orange moon
Tonight the Man-in-the-moon is
Jack O'Lantern

Vancouver visit
Gray rain cold mist I carry
My sunshine inside

Past Fall Equinox
Autumn sun starts sleeping in
I sleep later, too

Lightning jig-jags across night sky
Incandescent blinding flash
Electric ozone trail blasted
Through deluge and darkness
On one second delay broadcast
Thunder's decibels deafening

Distant forest fires
Burning in my throat and in my eyes
In the sky a hazy egg yolk
Smolders behind a hazy gray curtain
The city smells like a campsite
And looks like Armageddon

Go Gently Forward Into That Good Night

by Wei-Ching Chang

Go gently forward into that good night,
Old age brings wisdom and light at end of day;
Cheers, cheers for life's miraculous delight.

Wise men, through their lives, know life is right,
Because their minds are enlightened they
Go gently forward into that good night.

Good men, living for the present, know how bright
Their deeds have illuminated Nature's way;
Cheers, cheers for life's miraculous delight.

Wild men who soared 'n' topped a creative height,
Find happily that they did have their way;
To go gently forward into that good night.

Brave men, who face death squarely without fright,
Know when to fight and let go and be gay;
Cheers, cheers for life's miraculous delight.

And you, my friend, enjoy life with all your might,
Count your blessings and shed joyful tears, I say.
Go gently forward into that good night.
Cheers, cheers for life's miraculous delight.

De Hunebedden*

By Hannah Slomp

My Scandinavian ancestors tickle my veins
As soon as the snow falls. They rise from their frozen graves
And glide over my snowy meadows
on their lange loufen their poles stab at my hide.

They hang up raw meat, smoked on open fires,
Rip through it with sharp canines,
Huddle in rabbit skinned robes,
And plan the journey through this unexpected winter.

The voyage has begun, cutting through
These frozen fjords and straits,
unrecognizably beautiful, insulated under
intricate, crystalline flakes.

This hair of mine, the colour of autumn
darkens with the dark days of winter solstice.
The blond of summer sun slips away,
Into frost-bitten split ends, hibernating, dull.

But the mind of my ancestors does not hibernate,
it refuses to sleep in these modern caves
and dreams up melodies that can only be heard
sung over endless prairie snow.

* De Hunebedden are the ancient stone graves of the Huns
kilometres away from where I was born in Holland.

I DO IT

by Yaa Serwaa Somuah

I have never done it right
But I do it anyway
I have never had the right manners
To fit into the occasion
But I do it anyway
I say it they say it's inappropriate
But I say it anyway

Nothing I say or do seem right
Everyone says am odd
I have never known the best way of loving you
But I love you anyway
I have never got the timing right
But I do it anyway
I will never know
Until I do it
And even if I fail
I do it
Anyway

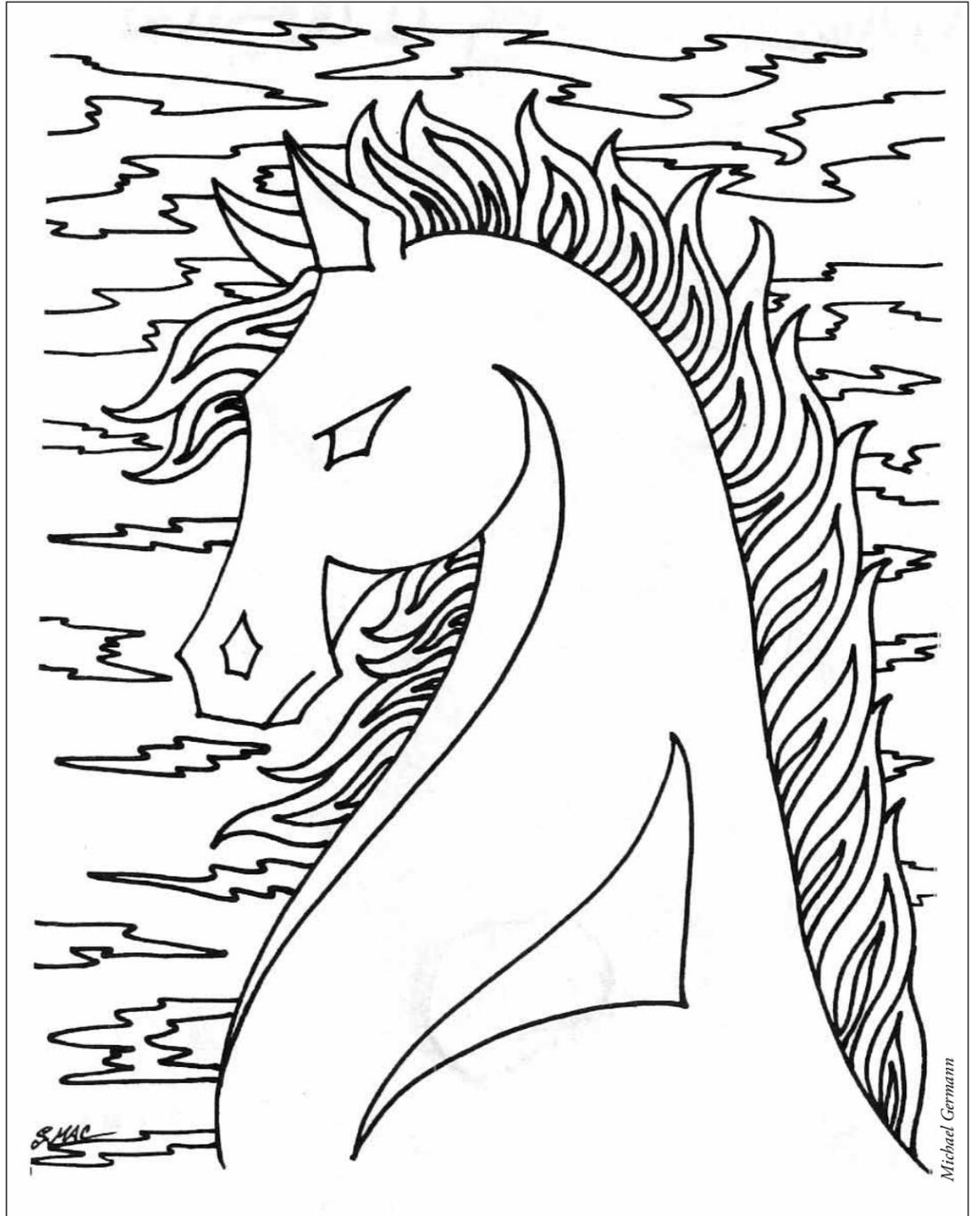
kid's kormer

STICKMAN

By Gala Freeman- Peters



COLOR ME!



CREATIVE A FORM ATIONS

Construct a sentence using every letter of the word. Figure out what the vertical word means to you, and find other words that begin with each letter. There are no right or wrong words.

Try these five games. Feel free to make your own versions. Be positive. Have fun.

Example:

Being
Energetic
Loving
Options
Now
Growing

U _____	P _____
N _____	E _____
I _____	A _____
T _____	C _____
Y _____	E _____
S _____	R _____
H _____	E _____
A _____	S _____
R _____	P _____
E _____	E _____
	C _____
	T _____
	Y _____

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Jonathon Robert figtree79@hotmail.com

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

for the neighbourhoods of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue and Westwood

Listings for free events and programs as well as volunteer opportunities. Submit online at ratcreek.org.

ENTERTAINMENT

HOCKEY DAY IN CANADA

Join us for tabletop hockey and virtual hockey tournaments. Saturday, February 12 from 2-3:30pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St). Everyone welcome.

STORYTIME FOR GROWN-UPS

Join Edmonton Public Library staff for a selection of short stories geared towards adults. Sit back, relax, and escape from the everyday as we bring you engaging stories, expertly read. Wednesdays from 7:30-8pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

OPEN MIC

Zoomers (Boomers with Zip!) Thursdays, 1-4pm. Music, spoken word, comedy. Saturdays 7:30-9:30pm. The Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave).

EVENTS

CARROT BOOK CLUB

Lively discussions, humor and enlightenment. Book: "Massey Lectures" by Douglas Copeland. Tuesday, February 1, 7pm at The Carrot Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave).

U OF A AUTHOR READINGS

Hosted by Karen Virag. Wednesday, February 2, 7pm at the Carrot Arts Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave).

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE HEALING

Weekend healing circle for adults affected by child sexual abuse. This workshop will look at ways look can help to heal us. Support person or family member welcome. Saturday & Sunday, February 19-20. Register at www.systemicvariables.com or call Anne at 780-721-2960.

PROGRAM / CLASS

ART CLASSES

Art making ranging from clay building to printmaking and everything in between. Community Night: Tuesdays from 6:30-8:30pm and Family Night: Thursdays from 6:30-

8:30pm at Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts (9225 118 Ave). Limited space, call 780-474-7611 to register.

PRACTICE ENGLISH

Are you learning English? We'll have conversations about many different topics using library materials. A library staff member will lead the group and English speakers at all levels are welcome! Drop-in Mondays from 6:30-8:30 at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

TIME FOR TWOS

For you and your two-year old. We'll wiggle, move and maybe learn a new tune or two. Drop-in Wednesdays (Feb 2, 9, 16) from 11-11:30am at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

DADDY AND BABY TIME

Enjoy a special bonding time for babies and their male caregivers. Learn songs and rhymes that help support your baby's development in a relax environment. Drop-in Thursdays (Feb 3 - Apr 7) from 6:30-7pm at Sprucewood Library (11555 95 St).

ENGLISH CONVERSATION CAFE

For those who need to practice their new found English language skills. Every Saturday 10-11:30am at Bethel Gospel Chapel (95 St & 117 Ave). Free child care provided.

GIRL GUIDES AND BROWNIES

Fun, friendships and new challenges: Sparks (K-Gr 1), Brownies (Gr 2-3), Girl Guides (Gr 4-6). Mondays at 6:30pm at St. Andrew's Church (8715 118 Ave). More info: Jean 780-469-4487 or Angel 780-642-0879.

SOCIAL

SENIORS LUNCH

Wednesdays from 11:30am-12:45pm at Crystal Kids Youth Centre (8715 118 Ave).

LIL SPROUTS PLAYGROUP

Bring your kids, snacks and ideas and make friends while sharing in activities, adventure and fun! Fridays from 10am-12pm at Parkdale-Cromdale hall (11335 85 St). www.parkdalecromdale.org

KARAOKE NIGHT

Tune up your vocal cords and join us down Green Frog's Pub (9349 118 Ave) for a hopping good time of socializing and singing. Friday, February 25 at 8:30pm.

DINNER CLUB

Discover new flavours and restaurants while you explore a variety of wonderful cuisine along Alberta Avenue with friends & neighbours. Check the calendar at www.crudedmonton.org for time and location of this months feast.

SPORTS & REC

COMMUNITY SWIM

Free swim for Alberta Avenue Community League members. Sundays from 12pm to 2pm at Eastglen Pool (11410 64 St).

CRUD DOG WALKING GROUP

Meet neighbours (and their canine companions) while walking around the community. Mondays evenings: 6:30pm in front of St. Alphonsus Church (11828-85 Street). The walk is cancelled if below -15C.

FAMILY GYM NIGHT

Get a little exercise and tire out the kids. Various toys & equipment available e.g. basketball, floor hockey, soccer, dodgeball. Wednesdays from 5-6pm at Alberta Avenue (9210 118 Ave) for parents with their children under 12 years. League membership required.

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY RINKS

Buy a community league membership and receive skate tags which allow you to skate for free at any community league rink. Alberta Ave (9210 118 Ave): Mon-Fri 4-8pm; Sat-Sun 1-6pm Delton (12325 88 St): Eastwood (11803 86 St): Parkdale (11335 85 St): Mon-Fri 4-8pm; Sat-Sun 12-8pm Sheriff Robertson (82 St & 111 Ave): snowbank; anytime Spruce Ave (10240 115 Ave): Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 6:30-9pm; Sat 2-8pm; Sun 1:30-4pm.

INDOOR PUBLIC SKATING

No sticks or pucks allowed. Grand Truck (13024 112 St) on Sundays 1-2pm

Oliver (10335 119 St) on Tuesdays 6:15-7:15pm Russ Barnes (6725 121 Ave) on Wednesdays 6-7pm Westwood (12040 97 St) on Saturdays 3:15-4:15pm

NOTICES

PARKDALE-CROMDALE AGM

The PCCL annual general meeting is on March 31 from 7-9p.m. Find out more about your league and influence what happens in your community! A new board will be elected.

FREE SAND

All Edmonton Community Leagues should have a green box of sand near their building. This sand is provided by the City of Edmonton for the public. Please sand your slippery walks! If a box is empty, call 311 and report it. Leagues & addresses can be found at efcl.org.

COPS AT THE CARROT

Join EPS members every Tuesday morning from 9:30 to 11 am for open and direct access to the EPS members working in your community. Bring your questions and comments or come in for a visit and coffee.

WRITING HELP & FEEDBACK

Would you like feedback on your creative writing? Do you have writerly impulses but don't know where to start? Do you long for a lively discussion on semi-colon usage? Drop in or make an appointment with Jocelyn Brown, writer-in-residence for the Canadian Authors' Association. Jocelyn will be "in residence" at the Nina Haggerty gallery every Tuesday and Wednesday from 11am-2pm. To submit your work online or make an appointment, go to: <http://www.canauthorsalberta.ca/writers-in-residence>

VOLUNTEER

BE A SNOW ANGEL

Shovel snow for a neighbour who needs help. Nominate your good neighbourhood for Mayor's recognition and a chance to win great prizes.

www.edmonton.ca/snowangels or call 311.

RINK HOSTS NEEDED AT AB AVE

Hang at the Alberta Ave rink and serve hot chocolate. Hosts needed for Saturdays and Sundays from January to March, shifts are 1pm to 3:30pm and 3:30pm to 6pm. Call 780-477-2773 or email info@albertaave.org.

HANG AT A GALLERY

Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts is looking for individuals willing to share 2-4 hours a week as gallery attendants. Gain experience working in a gallery setting, while supporting your neighborhood arts scene! For more info, contact Anna at volunteer@ninahaggertyart.ca

BE A COFFEE BARTENDER

Learn how to be a barista and make lattes and other coffees, then hang out at a cool coffee shop for 3 or 4 hours and visit with the interesting people who stop in. Drop by: The Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse at 9351 118 Ave, call 780-471-1580 or visit www.thecarrot.ca.

DRIVE A SENIOR

Be a volunteer driver who spends 3-4 hours once a month to drive an elderly senior to medical appointments, banking and/or shopping. Gas reimbursed. Call Bev at 780-732-1221.

Church services

Avenue Vineyard Church

A friendly, informal, non-judgmental and safe place to grow spiritually. Traditional Christian values in a non-traditional way. **8718 118 Ave** (Crystal Kids building) **Sundays at 10:30 am** www.avenuevineyard.com

Bethel Gospel Chapel

A Bible-based, multi-ethnic fellowship **11461 95 St. 780-477-3341** **Sunday meetings:** 9:30 AM – Lord's Supper 11:00 AM – Family Bible Hour Saturdays – Free English Conversation Café for immigrants

Advertise your church here for only \$120/year. Contact ads@ratcreek.org

Promote your event or program!

Calendar Guidelines

Our community calendar listings are for FREE events and programs happening in the seven neighbourhoods covered by the Rat Creek Press as well as volunteer opportunities. Submit online at ratcreek.org under the calendar tab.

- Events must be submitted by the 18th to get printed in the next month's paper. Events are also published online.
- Limit of 5 event listings per organization/group.
- Reoccurring events need to be confirmed every three months.
- If your event or program is not free or you have a notice, job ad or business advertising, please refer to our classifieds or display ads.

Advertise in the Classifieds!

- 1 classified \$25.
- 6 classified credits \$120.
- 12 classified credits \$180.
- 25 character title in BOLD CAPS + 200 characters (approximately 35 words).
- Submit classified to the website at www.ratcreek.org by the 18th for the next month's print issue.
- Payment due in advance.



It was cold. It was snowing. It was fun.

The 2011 edition of the Deep Freeze Festival succeeded despite the worst weather Alberta could throw our way. In addition to the ice sculptors, the hockey games, and the sleigh ride, many attendees played 'push-that-car'. For those hiding from the elements, the Cycle Building opened it's doors to an impressive display of arts and crafts, book binding, and bees wax cream. The music was warm at the always-packed Carrot Cafe, and Alberta Avenue Community Hall was a welcome refuge for hundreds of families.



THE TOASTED BUNS TURNED OUT WELL... AND THE MAPLE SYRUP STICKS DOWN THE STREET WERE PRETTY TASTY TOO.



THEY WERE EATING UP MORE THAN POUTINE DURING THE DEEP FREEZE PARTY ON SATURDAY, JAN. 8. THE CROWD WAS FEASTING ON THE GROOVE OF LE FUZZ WHO PLAYED LATE TO SATISFY THE HUNGER. FROM BELLY DANCING TO THE INTERMEZZO OF THE MUMMERS, SATURDAY'S ENTERTAINMENT HAD EVERYONE FORGETTING THE MISERABLE COLD OUTSIDE.



IT WAS EASILY THE COLDEST WEEKEND OF THE YEAR TO HAVE A WINTER FESTIVAL, BUT WAGON AFTER WAGON WAS FILLED WITH FAMILIES WHO REFUSED TO MISS OUT ON THE RIDE. TOUGHER THAN THE HOCKEY PLAYERS, COOLER THAN THE ICE SCULPTURES, THESE KIDS WOULDN'T STAY INDOORS.

Happy New Year!

I am continuing to call on the Alberta government to open the urgent care and family medicine sections of the East Edmonton Health Centre. I urge you to join me in the fight by contacting my office and requesting copies of my petition pressuring the government to do so, and circulating them to your friends, neighbours, and families. Together, we can make a difference in our community.

Your MLA, Brian Mason
Edmonton Highlands-Norwood
6519 - 112 Avenue
www.brianmason.ca ph: 780.414.0682

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T: 780.996.4728 | email: info@crudemonton.org
www.crudemonton.org